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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0689

INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 7095

RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 7413

RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2744

RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 5455

RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 6579

RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3194

RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 0282

RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 4727

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2399

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 3634

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHMFIISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000804

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/06/2019

TAGS: PGOV PHUM KDEM NP

SUBJECT: NEPAL: UNMIN MONITORING OF PLA COMBATANTS IN DOUBT

REF: KTM 00741

Classified By: Charge d' Affaires, a.i., Jeffrey A. Moon. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶11. (SBU) Summary: Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA) combatants were detained outside of their cantonment on August 24 carrying weapons and dressed in military fatigues. UNMIN publicly expressed "serious concern" about the incident, which it said was a clear violation of peace agreements. Other GON officials and international observers say similar incidents occur regularly and that the only difference in the August 24 case was the new Home Minister's decision to publicize the incident as part of his new security crackdown. Nepal's Peace and Reconciliation Minister, the political parties in the coalition government, and commentators are openly questioning UNMIN's effectiveness in monitoring PLA combatants in cantonments. End Summary.

ARMED PLA DETAINED

¶12. (U) On August 24, in Kapilvastu (just west of Chitwan, in the Terai), the Nepal Police and Armed Police Force stopped and detained 19 Maoist combatants, some of whom were wearing Maoist military fatigues and carrying weapons. UNMIN dispatched a team of Arms Monitors who determined the 19 Maoists were registered members of a nearby cantonment, Main Cantonment Site 4. They also confirmed the weapons carried by the Maoists had barcodes and serial numbers and were registered by UNMIN for Maoist use to provide security for the cantonment. UNMIN Arms Monitors and police then escorted the combatants back to the cantonment.

UNMIN'S "SERIOUS CONCERN"

¶13. (SBU) In an August 25 public statement UNMIN expressed "serious concern" over the incident (release available at <http://www.unmin.org.np>), and said it violated commitments made in the December 2006 Agreement on the Monitoring of the Management of Arms and Armies. They specifically pointed out violations of the following provisions.

--Provision 4.1.2: Requires all Maoist army weapons and ammunition to be secured under UNMIN control, except as provided for perimeter security. Each cantonment is allowed 30 weapons for clearly defined perimeter security.

--Provision 5.1.1: Prohibits the "holding and carrying of

arms."

--Provision 5.3.2: Prohibits "unauthorized troop movements."

¶4. (C) UNMIN Political Officer Yohn Medina told Emboff August 28 they were taking the incident very seriously and thought this was a good opportunity to push forward on integration issues. He lamented the fact that for the past two years, and through three governments, parties have resisted any movement on military integration and rehabilitation.

MAOIST DEFENSE

¶5. (U) Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal told the press August 26 that PLA combatants had not violated any agreements, and claimed that the detained Maoists were part of his security detail, which he said was permissible under the agreements. Dahal said he used vehicles and escorts from cantonments several times in the past without UNMIN comment and that the incident was being blown out of proportion.

UNMIN EFFECTIVENESS QUESTIONED

¶6. (C) On August 26, Nepal's Minister for Peace and Reconciliation Rakam Chemjong publicly said that "UNMIN's role in monitoring and supervising Maoist arms and armies is not very effective and this failing has resulted in frequent outings for the Maoist fighters." Nepali Congress (NC) party Vice President Gopal Man Shrestha also told Emboff on August 27 the incident was a serious violation of the peace

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agreement, and blamed UNMIN for not properly monitoring the camps.

COMMON OCCURANCE

¶7. (C) In an August 27 meeting with Charge, Indian DCM Ahok Sinha commented that this type of activity was not new. He accused the PLA of carrying weapons and moving about outside the cantonments regularly. He questioned why the combatants were detained this particular time and speculated the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (UML) and NC were using UNMIN as a "punching bag" to vent their frustration over the popular perception that UNMIN has in the past favored the Maoists. International Crisis Group's Nepal Director Rhoderick Chalmers told Emboff August 27 that the event indicated the Maoists might not have as much control over their cadre as previously thought. He said for the Maoists to violate the arms agreements so explicitly was "stupid" and shows that they are unpredictable.

¶8. (C) As recently as May 2009, Emboffs reported seeing armed, uniformed Maoists outside the cantonments on the major East-West highway operating roadblocks and asking for donations. Trusted USG contractors and GON security officials have also confirmed increased movement of Maoist combatants in and out of camps. Many reports indicate combatants are traveling for non-military and non-political reasons, such as attending to seasonal harvesting of crops and to escape monsoon flooding in the camps. Our contacts report that no UNMIN presence is visible around the cantonments on a regular basis. Emboffs also noted during a recent trip on the East-West highway that security forces had removed all Maoist roadblock.

NEW SHERIFF

¶9. (C) Defense Secretary Nabin Kumar Ghimire -- the second highest-ranking official at the Ministry of Defense -- told Charge on August 28 that police forces have confronted, detained, and released PLA combatants on numerous occasions outside the cantonments. The only difference with this incident, according to Ghimire, was new Home Minister Bhim Rawal's (UML) decision to publicize the incident as part of

his new, tougher security strategy (reftel). Ghimire asserted that Rawal and the UML were trying to pressure UNMIN to take a firmer monitoring approach toward the Maoists. Ghimire's knowledge of the situation was based on having served for a year in his previous position as Home Ministry Joint Secretary, where he helped Rawal draft the new security plan before his promotion two weeks ago to the Defense Secretary post.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) This incident highlights the importance of moving forward quickly on integration and rehabilitation of Maoist combatants. UNMIN's monitoring powers seem limited, and are unlikely to increase with the passage of time. Lax monitoring also increases the possibility of an intentional or unintentional exchange of gunfire between armed Maoists and security forces that could escalate quickly into a broader crisis.

MOON